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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: COP15, AFGHANISTAN, HEALTHCARE;BERLIN

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- [1](#)1. Lead Stories Summary

Primetime newscasts opened with reports on the impact the cold weather had in Europe and along the East Coast. Most newspapers led with stories on the aftermath of the climate conference in Copenhagen. Headlines included: QMerkel: DonQt badmouth results of CopenhagenQ (Frankfurter Allgemeine), QClimate: Merkel defends minimum compromiseQ (Die Welt), QMerkel defends climate summit (Tagesspiegel), QClimate protection must waitQ (Berliner Zeitung), QThe world faces a climate depressionQ (Frankfurter Rundschau), QState leaders euphemize the summitQs failureQ (FT Deutschland). Sueddeutsche led with a story on Defense Minister zu GuttenbergQs proposal to speak with insurgents in Afghanistan. Several media carried reports on President ObamaQs efforts to reach a health care bill. Editorials focused on the Copenhagen conference and the German debate over Afghanistan.

- [1](#)2. Copenhagen Climate Conference

Summary: The German media agreed that the Copenhagen conference was a QdisasterQ and a Qfailure.Q Frankfurter RundschauQs editorial emphasized QHopenhagen turned into Brokenhagen.Q Commentators in particular expressed skepticism over whether the structure of the UN is the right one to resolve the climate problem. QThe UN conference process has failed in Copenhagen. Governments that are serious about climate protection must therefore move ahead independently, FT Deutschland editorialized.

ARD-TVQs Tagesthemen commented: QA disaster. The fuss made in Copenhagen made the climate catastrophe more likely. Our great-great-grand children might burn, drown, suffocate or die of thirst. Ecologically seen, America remains an ecological rogue state even under Obama and industrialized nations remain the axis of evil. ChinaQs environmental behavior is bad, but we are worse.

Industrial countries should have delivered more. Politicians have failed miserably in Copenhagen. However, every person can do something to protect the climate. We fail every day. Our children will curse us.

On ZDF-TVQs Morgenmagazin analyzed: QToo many cooks spoil the broth  
Many participants must be blamed. The emerging countries did not have a good approach to climate protection because they focused on their national interests and it was also Barack Obama who did not perform well diplomatically. He delivered a lukewarm speech, and he wanted to produce a mock result. One could notice that he did not really care and he left behind sad results when he departed.

Westdeutscher Rundfunk radio opined: QThe international climate protection process will go on somehow. However, it was badly damaged. Copenhagen has made clear that the climate protection caravan cannot simply continue on this course and agree on a minimum consensus every year. The process itself must be fundamentally reconsidered. The Danish presidency acted clumsily and the UN contributed to the chaos by allowing tens of thousands of participants to attend the conference. All this led to the evil spirit of Copenhagen and such a sobering result. There might be alternatives to such negotiations--for instance the G20. Complex international problems cannot be resolved in the framework of a UN conference, where representatives of 193 countries with the most diverse interests and culture are sitting around the table. This process was discredited in Copenhagen.

ZDF-TVQs Heute stated: QThe result is a sad pile of leftovers, a disaster. Twelve years of international climate policy went down

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the drain. We have fallen back behind the Kyoto Protocol. It remains completely unclear whether we can catch up one day. The summit failed because of national selfishness of many countries. In particular the U.S. and China did not want to give up their sovereignty in climate protecting matters. Also the way the negotiations were conducted was wrong. Prime Minister Rasmussen was sometimes extremely clumsy and contributed to this failure.

Deutschlandfunk radio commented: QGermany has gambled away much confidence at the climate summit in Copenhagen, in particular among developing countries. The unfortunate discussion that development assistance could be taken into account for the climate protection measures put off the third world. In addition, state and government leaders did not agree on a common political goal early enough. Only when the negotiations were already underway, the EU met at the highest level to discuss the goal. This was not a lead role that the EU and Germany could be proud of.

Frankfurter Allgemeine noted in a front-page editorial: QThe climate summit of Copenhagen was not a success, not even a small one. We cannot therefore badmouth the results, as Chancellor Merkel warned. The results are not presentable. Nobody should euphemize them. The failure of Copenhagen is sweeping. The conference of the 193 state and government leaders demonstrated the Chinese and Indian influence on the future of world politics. It demonstrated the helplessness of the Europeans to push through their goals without the help of the Americans. The content of the agreement could not be smaller. Although the goal of keeping the increase of temperature below two degrees of Celsius was stated, it was said nowhere how to achieve it. It remains a riddle how this can be brought to a good end next year.

Sueddeutsche editorialized: QCopenhagen is an insult to the international community. Never have the expectations of a climate conference been higher, never before have so many state leaders gathered to resolve one problem. However, they did not resolve it, they made it worse.

Frankfurter Rundschau remarked: QIt does not make sense to continue the circus of the UN climate conference. The only chance we have is that the greatest emitters must take the lead, if in doubt, without any guarantee that the others will join in. Fifteen countries in the world are responsible for 80 percent of carbon

dioxide emissions. They all said in Copenhagen how important climate protection is to them. The politicians of these countries must now implement this, and their voters must hold them responsible.

Handelsblatt highlighted: QThe climate conference in Copenhagen failed especially due to the conflict between rich and poor. When the great powers of world politics put their proposals on the table, less powerful countries rebelled and won. Not just climate politics has reached a low. Also UN conference diplomacy in its current format faces its end.

FT Deutschland editorialized: QAfter the fiasco of Copenhagen, there is no ground to be optimistic that things will be better next year. It has been an illusion right from the start that the worldQs two biggest emittersQChina and the U.S.Qwould agree to a binding treaty with clear emission goals and international checks under the auspices of the United Nations. It was never before demonstrated so brutally to Europeans that they have lost enormous influence in central questions of international politics. They are only being noticed. The UN conference process has failed in Copenhagen. Governments that are serious about climate protection must therefore move ahead independently instead of waiting for a breakthrough in Bonn, Mexico or elsewhere.

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### 13. Afghanistan

Frankfurter Allgemeine editorialized: QIt has been candidly said in public and in parliament for the first time that the Bundeswehr is at war in Afghanistan. This does not make the decision about increasing the German contingent easier. A competitive vote in the Bundestag would be poisonous for the moral of the troops in Afghanistan.

QAt last, a debate about a war,Q Berliner Zeitung commented: QOne might praise the SPD for enforcing an overdue political debate over the war in Afghanistan and the role of the Germans. At least, they have a position. We would indeed like to know more about the goal and strategy the German government will pursue at the international Afghanistan conference. The realization of the Social Democrats has come late. The Bundestag renewed the Bundeswehr mandate for Afghanistan only a few weeks ago. This would have been the right time for a debate. The war in Afghanistan has been controversial for a long time, and it is time to have this controversy in public.

### 14. Healthcare Bill

Berliner Zeitung noted that Qthe President is about to achieve an historic victory. Obama has allowed Senate leader Harry Reid enough flexibility to reach a compromise in the Senate. It now looks as if the reform of a century could be passed on Christmas Eve. It is natural that not everybody is happy with the result. The matter is very complex. Instead of walking into the trap of all or nothing, Obama showed himself once again to be a pragmatic politician. Given that the President has not yet used all his capital, he can influence the upcoming negotiations in Congress. These are the best conditions for finally establishing a comprehensive healthcare insurance in the United States.

Under the headline QObamaQs lousy good compromise,Q Sueddeutsche editorialized: QMaybe the Senate will now approve the draft of the reform. Obama will be jubilant and still be suspicious about what will come next. Also the House of Representatives must still agree. There, the President must still persuade liberals that half a success is still a success, and that it is better than nothing.

Tagesspiegel commented: QBarack Obama is about to achieve the greatest success of his presidency: the approval of the healthcare reform in the Congress. The House of Representatives has agreed on its version in November. The president now has obviously cobbled a majority together in the Senate. Both drafts then have to be matched by a mediation committee. ObamaQs victory on this front is now highly likely.

